

Volume 2, Number 4

July 8, 1990

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| Fidonet HAM/PACKET Digest - For up to date HAM/PACKET info |
|=====
| Established March, 1989 |
|
| Published by : Brian Murrey KB9BVN at Indpls, IN |
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E D I T O R I A L S

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This months issue contains a very good article on grounding your equipment and the entire shack. It's amazing how much a really good grounding system can improve your RX and TX, take a look at this one if you don't read anything else in this issue.

This newsletter is and has been distributed via the Fidonet SDS, it is also available for downloading from GEnie, and the SouthSide BBS. File requests are not honored between the hours of 3am to 5am EST.

73 de KB9BVN

SouthSide BBS - 317-882-9330 - 12/24/9600 HST (no 300 baud)
(Node 1:231/30)

I hope you enjoy this issue!

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B U L L E T I N S

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=====| Relayed from packet radio via |
| N8EMR's Ham BBS, 614-895-2553 1200/2400/9600/V.32/PEP/MNP5 |
=====

ZCZC AE80
DX BULLETIN 26 ARLD026
FROM ARRL HEADQUARTERS
NEWINGTON CT JUNE 29, 1990
TO ALL RADIO AMATEURS

THANKS TO PAUL, KB1BE, AND THE CONNECTICUT DX ASSOCIATION FOR THE FOLLOWING DX INFORMATION.

GEORGIA, UF7. A JOINT U.S. AND SOVIET AMATEUR OPERATION, FROM OLBAST 017, IS ORGANIZED BY RW6AC WITH K1ZZI, KP4DQ, WF2S AND AA6PY. WITH A TOTAL OF 12 SOVIET AMATEURS, THEY WILL OPERATE FROM JULY 1 TO 15. OPERATING PORTABLE UF7V FROM THE COAST OF THE BLACK SEA AND THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS. ACTIVITY WILL BE BOTH CW AND SSB, 10 TO 80 METERS.

PENGUIN ISLANDS, ZS1. DK9KX HAS ANNOUNCED A DXPEDITION FROM THE ISLANDS OFF NAMIBIA, SOUTHWEST AFRICA, STARTING JULY 14TH. THE LIST OF OPERATORS INCLUDE DF9KH, DK9KX, DL8CM, VS1DM AND ZS9A. CALL SIGN ON CW WILL BE DL8CM/ZS1 AND THE CALL SIGN ON SSB WILL BE DK9KX/ZS1. ON 6 METERS THE CALL WILL BE ZS9A/1. APPLICATION FOR NEW DXCC COUNTRY STATUS HAS BEEN MADE.

CAYMANS, ZF. WATCH FOR JOE, WA6VNR, ZF2A AND HIS XYL, NANCY, N6RLE, TO SIGN ZF2JT. THEY WILL BE WORKING ALL BANDS FROM JULY 1 TO 14. QSL TO THEIR HOME CALLS.

PITCAIRN ISLAND, VR6. VR6WH, BILL, WILL BE ACTIVE UNTIL DECEMBER, 1990, ON RTTY AS WELL AS SSB.

17 METER DX TIPS. HEARD AND WORKED THIS PAST WEEK, FROM THE EAST COAST, WERE THE FOLLOWING STATIONS.

A92BE	18130 @ 2057Z
C31LBB	18140 @ 2331Z
JY9SR	18072 @ 2022Z
N6BUV/KH0	18121 @ 1031Z
OA4CBN	18144 @ 0525Z
RB5IB	18132 @ 2102Z
RD70DC	18074 @ 0316Z

TG9VX 18155 @ 0127Z
VK7GK 18161 @ 0426Z
YB8HX 18147 @ 1240Z
YB0VSJ 18147 @ 1224Z

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ZS6BK 18155 @ 0615Z
3B8CF 18078 @ 0313Z
5T5FA 18121 @ 0639Z
6Y5IC 18150 @ 1318Z
7Q7JM 18143 @ 0450Z
9Y4KB 18152 @ 0245Z AR

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=====| Relayed from packet radio via |
| N8EMR's Ham BBS, 614-895-2553 1200/2400/9600/V.32/PEP/MNP5 |
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ZCZC AP31
PROPAGATION FORECAST BULLETIN 27 ARLP027
FROM ED TILTON, W1HDQ
SPRING HILL FL JULY 2, 1990
TO ALL RADIO AMATEURS

JUST AFTER THE MIDDLE OF JUNE, PROPAGATION ON OUR DX BANDS IMPROVED SOMEWHAT. PREVIOUS TO THEN, MAGNETIC DISTURBANCES HAD BEEN BOTHERSOME MUCH OF THE TIME, AS FAR BACK AS A YEAR AGO. NORMALLY WE EXPECT POOR OR ERRATIC DX CONDITIONS IN THE SUMMER MONTHS OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, BUT SINCE THE MIDDLE OF JUNE MAGNETIC ACTIVITY HAS SEEMED UNUSUALLY LOW, DESPITE A RAPID RISE IN THE SOLAR FLUX AFTER ABOUT JUNE 23.

THE SOLAR FLUX HAD DROPPED TO 133 BY THEN, BUT IT ROSE TO 235 BY JULY 1. MAGNETIC ACTIVITY INCREASED AFTER ABOUT JUNE 25, BUT IT WAS BACK TO NORMAL ON JUNE 30 AND JULY 1. MOSTLY OVERCAST SKIES PREVENTED VISUAL OBSERVATION OVER THE WEEKEND, IN OUR USUALLY SUNNY FLORIDA.

REPORTS OF UNUSUAL PROPAGATION ON THE DX BANDS, ON 50 MHZ AND ON HIGHER FREQUENCIES WOULD BE APPRECIATED BY THE AUTHOR OF THESE BULLETINS. ADDRESS THEM TO ED TILTON, W1HDQ, PO BOX 5529, SPRING

HILL, FL 34606.

AMERICAN SUNSPOT NUMBERS FOR JUNE 21 THROUGH 27 WERE 55, 67, 67, 87, 98, 142 AND 162 RESPECTIVELY, WITH A MEAN FIGURE OF 96.9. AR

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RAIN audio cassette service, 7/90

RP REPORT

Produced by Hap Holly/KC9RP

RAIN: Radio Amateur Information Network

P.O. Box 2565

Des Plaines, IL 60017-2565

(708) 827-RAIN

Dear Fellow Ham,

The RP REPORT is a professionally produced noncommercial interview series with the movers and shakers of Amateur Radio from both today and yesterday. RP REPORTS are typically about 15 minutes in length, and are formatted for airing on ham radio as authorized under FCC Regulation 97.111(B)6. Not available in any other medium, these incisive interviews are recorded both on location and via telephone

from coast to coast--border to border. RP REPORTS are often aired during a net in tandem with Newsline (formerly Westlink). In fact Newsline producer, Bill Pasternak/WA6ITF, the 1989 Dayton Hamvention "Radio Amateur of the Year", says the RP REPORT "tells the story behind the stories."

The Amateur Radio Service is constantly in a state of flux, changing literally from week to week. Just reading Amateur Radio magazines is not enough today, especially when much of what you are reading this month was written three months ago! The RP REPORT, however, can respond quickly to major events; and yet many of the programs can be aired months later and still be topical.

Your 90-minute cassette will contain not only RP REPORTS, but also additional indepth programs produced for the rAIN Dialup Service, (708) 299-INFO. These rAIN Weekly Spotlights/Special Reports typically take a Newsline story, and expand upon it. So you actually get as much rAIN programming as your tape will hold.

The July, 1990 cassette of rAIN audio programming contains the following. (playing times are estimated and given in MINUTES, and SECONDS.)

SIDE 1: RP REPORT V. 4 #19/20, "YHOTY 1990"--interview with Mary Alestra/KB2IGG (part 1, 16.16); part 2, 13.51); "DIGITAL RADIO FUTURES"--an interview with Ben Kobb/KC5CW (PART 1 10.20).

SIDE 2: ibid, (part 2 6.55); "FCC Drops A Bomb on the VEC onference"--an interview with Jim Georgias/W9JUG (13.11); V. 4 #21: "The World Radio Sport Team Championship"--an interview with Steve Morris/K7LXC (12.35); "I A R N Aids Iran"--interview with Glenn Baxter/K1MAN (11.53).

rAIN programming is available FREE OF CHARGE. Simply pick up a C90 cassette; place your cassette and its box into a standard-sized self-addressed stamped envelope with two ounces of postage attached; reinforce the corners and sides of the S.A.S.E. with wide, clear tape to prevent your cassette from falling out on its return trip. Then

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place the envelope and cassette inside a larger business-size no. 10 envelope; afix three ounces of postage to it, and send it to the rAIN p.o. box as shown above. It should not cost you more than \$1.10 postage per tape. Be advised next month's tap will be ready by the 1st; therefore, it's important your tape be here by then so you'll

have next month's programs with minimal delay. It's not too late, however, to send for the current programs listed above. 73, de
Hap/KC9RP@KB9DIP.IL.USA

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Rhode Island QSO Expedition

David Reinhart (WA6ILT), Darryl DelGrosso (WA1WYN) and Steve Caplowe (KA1UQS) announce a second "domestic DXpedition" to be conducted during July 27-29. As with last year's effort to Vermont, the goal is to put a hard to find state on the air to help hams get that "one last card" for WAS, 5BWAS or mode endorsements.

Rhode Island is the objective this year. The exact location has not been chosen, so county and grid square hunters must watch for packet bulletins.

The 1989 Vermont effort was not very successful. Signal reports were good but the QSO count was low. This was probably due to a lack of print publicity. Numerous packet bulletins were issued and people did comment that they had been following these.

Operation may start as early as 2000 Zulu on Friday the 27th. Look for the three calls about 15 KHz. up from the lower edge of the General phone bands, except on 10 meters where 28.465 is the frequency to watch. CW operation will be in the middle of the Novice bands on 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters. On other bands, look 15 KHz. up from the bottom of the General portion.

Mode of operation will change on the hour. Phone will run during even hours; CW during odd hours. RTTY and packet operators, listen for announcements of "specialty mode" operations. If resources are available, look for CW and SSB to be split. For example, 40 SSB and 80 CW. Announcements will be made on the air if this is the case.

A computer log program will be used again. Though the QSO volume did not make computerization a necessity last year, the system was well proved. QSLs are generated directly from the database on 4x6 index cards. They aren't pretty, but they count. Please QSL to WA6ILT at his Callbook address in Connecticut with a SASE. Send a big enough envelope if you want a card that isn't creased!

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ARTICLES

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ATV BALLOON LAUNCH POSTPONED DUE TO WX - WA1UXA

The ATV BALLOON launch scheduled for this past saturday was postponed due to horrendous flying weather. Actually the FAA made the decision for Bill. The new schedule is below. Please pay attention to the NEW range estimates for coverage. I had made an error on the first prediction. Coverage will be a good part of the EAST COAST !!

Saturday July 7: Launch of Micro Balloon. This balloon carries a CW telemetry beacon with altitude information. Rain date sunday July 8.

Saturday July 14:Launch of full ATV balloon. Altitude is expected to be 80,000 FT. Coverage of WATCHABLE VIDEO is expected to be 400 Miles. 10 mW beacon on 144.34 will fly as well. Rain date Sunday July 14.

You won't need too much to see the balloon. Because of its altitude it might be better to have a lower gain wider pattern antenna or something like a sattellite array with an elevation rotor. Polarazation is horizontal. Listen for the beacon on 144.340 and the launch net on 7155. Net time about 8:00 Am. Launch time about 9:00 am both days. Note the launch may have to be scrubbed due to WX or prevailing winds.

73

Gene WA1UXA

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Grounding Techniques for Radio Installations
by Gary Coffman KE4ZV

There are three main reasons to ground radio equipment.

1. Safety grounding to protect operators from accidental electrical shock.
2. RF grounding to prevent spurious and harmonic radiation and to enhance antenna efficiency.
3. Lightning protection.

Each of these require different grounding technique. A careful analysis of the ground methods used is required to determine if all three objectives are met.

Safety grounding is in many ways the easiest criteria to meet. Simply bonding all equipment cabinets to the power company ground with

conductors of low resistance and adequate current carrying capacity to blow the circuit breakers will meet safety requirements.

Effective RF grounding is often much harder to achieve. The ground path must not offer any significant impedance at the frequencies of interest. Since the frequencies of interest are often octaves apart, this is challenging. The frequencies of interest are the fundamental frequency of the transmitter, the harmonic frequencies of the transmitter, and any spurious frequencies the transmitter may generate. The latter is usually the toughest.

Grounding for lightning protection is difficult due both to the magnitudes of the voltages and currents involved and to the fact that the lightning waveform is a step function and has considerable RF energy.

Probably the WORST problem one faces in designing an effective grounding system is the prevention of GROUND LOOPS. Ground loops will cause unintended currents to flow in circuitry, often with disastrous effects. Either damage or degraded operation will inevitably be the result of a ground loop.

The best method of securing a good ground for a radio installation is to use a GROUND WINDOW. The ground window technique requires that every cable that enters or leaves the radio room pass through one small area where all ground connections are made.

The power company ground must be bonded to the ground window and surge suppressors such as those marketed by Lightning Protection Associates should be installed in series with the hot wires. Note that simple shunt protectors will not be sufficient to protect the equipment in the event of a direct lightning strike. Series protectors are designed to open the circuit under severe overload.

All coaxial cables must have their shields attached to the ground window and have their inner conductors clamped with an arc cartridge designed to fail shorted. In addition the inner conductor should be

fused in a manner that will open the line when the arc cartridge fails.

Telephone cables must enter through the ground window and have their leads clamped with MOVs and arc cartridges that are designed to fail shorted. In addition all leads must be fused in a manner that will

open the line when the arc cartridge fails.

Each piece of equipment in the radio room must be attached to the ground window by a wide heavy strap installed so as to be as short and straight as possible. Neatness definitely does not count here. Don't "dress" the ground cable, make it short and direct. Do not "daisy chain" grounds. Make sure that the only path from one piece of equipment to another is via the ground window. This means that interconnecting shielded cables should go from the equipment out to the ground window, have the shield bonded to the ground window, then return to the next piece of equipment. This is the only sure way to prevent circulating ground currents.

Now that every piece of equipment in the radio room is at the same potential as the ground window, the ground window must be brought to true earth ground. This is fairly easy for DC and low frequency AC, just make sure the cable is heavy enough to have the smallest possible voltage drop across it. For RF, inductance and resonance effects must be considered as well as skin effect. A wide flat copper strap that is routed as straight as possible to earth ground is preferred. For maximum lightning protection, the ground strap must never travel upward because the space charge will resist the current flow. Sharp bends will act as single turn inductances and should be avoided. Since a single ground cable will exhibit resonance at certain frequencies due to it's length, several ground cables should be used with each a different length. The lengths should be chosen such that a cable that is near a quarter wavelength at a given frequency will be paralleled by a cable that is near a half wavelength. In practice, several cables varying from the shortest possible length to twice the shortest length should be paralleled so that at least one will present a low impedance at any frequency. Do not coil the longer cables, instead fan them at the center point.

The method used to route cables down the tower will effect the degree of lightning protection achieved. If possible use a plumber's delight type of antenna that is dc grounded to the tower. Route the coax down the inside of the tower, and ground the shield of the coax to the tower at several points. This last will short out the single turn transformer formed by the tower and the shield of the cable. Unless this transformer is shorted, currents flowing in the tower to ground will induce currents in the shield of the coax.

The true ground must be more than a single stake driven into the earth. If the tower is ground mounted, use the base of the tower as the center of the ground field, otherwise drive an eight foot ground rod to form the center point of the ground field. Run radials out from the center of the ground field to a buried loop connecting a series of ground rods separated from each other by no less than eight

feet. A minimum of eight rods should be used. If possible, the

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radials should continue outward for one quarter wavelength at the lowest frequency of operation. If your tower is not ground mounted, bring it's base ground back to the ground window using multiple lengths of cable as discussed above. Do not run a ground cable directly from the isolated tower to the true ground or a ground loop will surely be created that can allow damaging circulating currents to develop.

This all sounds like a lot of work and expense, but field experience has proven that a system like the one described will withstand direct lightning hits without loss of equipment, air time, or lives.

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Conversation with K2EEK, Editor CQ Magazine

After reading a number of replies to my comments about the demise of Ham Radio Magazine and my dissatisfaction with CQ magazine, I decided to call Alan Dorhoffer, K2EEK, the editor of CQ Magazine and ask him to elaborate on the editorial in the June issue of CQ. I felt that Alan's editorial and the message from CQ's publisher, Dick Ross, K2MGA, were quite negative regarding the technical aspect of amateur radio. Quoting a few of their comments:

CQ for the last 10 1/2 years has worked very hard to carve our a niche among today's amateurs. By todays amateurs, I mean those who are operator oriented and somewhat less technically geared. K2EEK

But the technicians among us no longer provide the numbers needed to support a monthly magazine of the caliber of Ham Radio. K2MGA

What changes are we likely to see within the pages of CQ? Probably not too much that you'll notice at first glance other than increased size. K2EEK

We agreed to the concept of integrating the circulation files of the two magazines, and to the broadening of the editorial scope of CQ to include more technical material, although it was clear that the very highly technical characteristic of the early Ham Radio would not be suitable for the combined audience of CQ and Ham Radio. K2MGA

There will be no fundamental changes in what has been CQ, right down to the food reviews. K2EEK

Obviously, we'd like to add more small projects for you to build (and use), and Ham Radio has always had interesting projects for an evening or weekend. K2EEK

These comments are illustrative of the overall tone of CQ after buying out Ham Radio. As someone who loves the technical side of the hobby, I was disgusted that the next three years of my subscription was going to buy a magazine whose editor and publishers felt this way.

At this point, I decided to call Alan, K2EEK, at his office. We spoke for what seemed well over an hour on 6/28 in the afternoon.

I was really quite surprised with some of Alan's comments and asked if I could pass them along to the net, to which he agreed. Alan, unlike the various ARRL officials I have conversed with over the years, was quite articulate while "pulling no punches" with his answers.

The word I would best describe Alan by would be a BUSINESSMAN. CQ magazine is there to make money. Period! While Alan enjoys amateur radio and running the magazine, it is still a business which must be profitable if he is to remain employed. Buying Ham Radio was a business decision based mainly on what the distribution outlet of Ham Radio Bookstore could bring to CQ Communications, Inc. Ham Radio

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Magazine really was secondary to the decision. Alan felt that Ham Radio Magazine was basically unwanted; the magazine was ailing to begin with, and that CQ would never publish the highly technical articles like Ham Radio did for fear of losing existing CQ readers.

He made this point quite clearly: "the reality is that the world has changed." Ham radio is dominated by the appliance operator and those few technically minded hams left are a small majority. His magazine is there to serve the needs of the masses, not the majority. He added that while CQ might become somewhat more technical, the changes would be very slight.

What was surprising to me was that Alan too mourned the loss of this technical competence in our hobby. He would like to see hams doing more technically challenging projects, but since they are not, CQ will be aimed for the non-technical audience. He said that right now, hams need to learn more about operating procedures, and rules and regulations. Alan lamented the fact that one could pass an amateur exam by passing only the technical questions and missing every

question on Rules & Regulations.

I asked Alan about a code-free license and whether he thought it might attract more technical people to the hobby. He answered that it probably would not - that the same percentage of technical people would be hams before and after adding a code-free license. The hobby would certainly grow but it would be basically the same mix of people - only larger. There would be no fundamental shift toward the technical side of the hobby.

To insert my opinion here, increasing the number of techies might cause some aspects of the hobby, such as digital communications or microwaves, to reach critical mass. Here you need more of the right people, spread across the country. If the larger numbers can be found by keeping the same percentage of a larger total, the effect will be the same as getting just a smaller number of the right folks. However, other problems such as HF and repeater crowding are functions of total numbers. Alan made mention that to keep our government happy, ham radio must create enough jobs and business capital if we are to keep our privileges. We need larger numbers for this.

I changed the subject back to the needs of the technically oriented ham and what possibilities Alan saw for us. He said that there was always QST, of course, but that the League was also aiming their magazine to the masses and that the masses were NOT technically oriented. He pointed out that QST had several advantages because they were not solely driven by subscriptions and advertiser revenue, and that they were a non-profit publication. Because of this, QST could afford to run an occasional article that would appeal to a specialty audience. CQ could not afford to do this. This is an important point made by several USENET readers. We should continue to encourage the League to run these articles in QST. As someone has pointed out, such articles may attract new people who had not been exposed to the more technical side of the hobby. Alan then said that he felt Wayne (Green) would fold his magazine soon (73). He agreed with me when I commented that I and many other people felt that there was no

professional integrity to Wayne's magazine. Alan said that there was a growing trend to produce specialty publications as evidenced on the number of books on packet radio, antennas, QRP, etc. He stated that these were targeted to a specialty audience - something that made them successful. The problem with including more technical articles in CQ was that they would take up room normally given to articles more suited to CQ subscribers. The loss of advertisers because of

increasing numbers of "homebrew" construction projects is a moot point. Advertisers have NO worry about hams building their own gear and abandoning commercial rigs. After all, how many of us can build an equivalent to an Icom, Kenwood, or Yaesu transceiver? Or even if we could, how much would the parts cost and where would we find all the necessary test equipment? Commercial ham equipment manufacturers actually want to see experimentation. If the experimenters had not built repeaters from surplus commercial FM gear, or played with OSCAR satellites, we still might be using Gonset Goony-boxes on 2-meter AM and 432 MHz might only be used by a handful of people in VHF contests. The experimenters open up new territory for the rest of the hams; when enough people are using the new technology and there is a demand for equipment, the manufacturers are more than happy to meet that demand. Look at the number of TNC's based on the TAPR design if you want to see a modern example.

Our talking about commercial equipment brought forth some negative comments from me about the equipment reviews in CQ. Alan responded by saying that CQ is not a "Consumers Reports" magazine. He said that even though QST published measured specifications, only a very small number of hams ever understood what the numbers or the intermodulation distortion graphs meant. Alan told me that hams buy equipment based on what other hams are buying - a herd mentality. After all, the major rigs are really quite similar in technical specifications. Want the best rig? Spend the most money! This is something I do not totally agree with although there is a lot of truth in his statements. Of course, CQ rates rigs more on operating convenience than actual technical specs.

I pointed out the review of the AEA Iso-Loop as being representative of the type of article that turned me off completely. Alan made it clear that he understood antenna theory fairly well. He said the only reason the model that was reviewed performed so well was that it was very high-Q. Hidden away in the review is the statement that all of the metal connections in the antenna are machined and welded. If the resonant Q is high enough, a small antenna can perform surprisingly well. Of course, it is very expensive to do the machining and welding. Alan and I both wondered how long it would be before this antenna was manufactured using rivets and clamps - and ceased to perform! I told Alan that I felt this point should have been made more prominently in the article. He said if AEA changed their design to lower their manufacturing costs (and seriously degrade the antenna performance), they might consider publishing a follow-up. He also defended the antenna matching unit ? they reviewed several years ago Max Com, if memory serves. This unit was basically a 50 ohm resistor across the dipole center insulator. Paraphrasing his comments: "So what if it is very inefficient. It allows your rig to operate with low SWR on bands that you could not operate on without a

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tuner." Of course, the unit cost about the same as a tuner. But a tuner requires some adjustments. Me? I use a tuner to match a dipole fed with ladder line. The dummy load is used only when I don't want to radiate a signal!

I then told Alan about my earlier call to Ham Radio where they told me a number of long-time subscribers were indignant about the sale to CQ and had canceled their subscriptions. He replied that he was aware of this although he had seen very few cancellations to date. There must be more than he cares to admit. CQ now requires you to cancel by mail, sending the subscription labels for both HR and CQ to them for processing. Alan told me that CQ was happy to cancel anyone's subscription and refund the money for the remainder. He said he wants repeat business and a good reputation; he does not want to make enemies. He reminded me that Skip Tenny, W1NLB, had sold Ham Radio because he wanted to retire, not because the magazine was in dire straits...yet. CQ bought HR mainly for the bookstore business; the gain in subscribers had little to do with the purchase. Alan also mentioned that anyone could choose to have the remainder of their Ham Radio subscription filled by any of the other CQ publications.

Finally, Alan told me of some VERY tentative plans for the future that will definitely be of interest to the technically minded hams. He said that he was considering the publishing of a technical quarterly. This quarterly would be aimed directly at the advanced experimenter. He described it almost as a professional journal, much more refined than QEX but aimed at a similar audience. He said this quarterly would not be sold in newsstands and that he expected a total subscription list of less than ten thousand. While Alan will not say anything definite, he said to expect the first issue late next fall, perhaps in November. I wished him the best of luck with this publication.

After exchanging a few more pleasantries, I said 73 to Alan, K2EEK. He was able to answer virtually all of my questions, but I was certainly not very happy with many of his answers. CQ may add a few more simple construction projects, but will likely never publish a microwave series like Glen Elmore's. The magazine still continues to be directed to the contesteer and appliance operator. But I must grudgingly admit that the average ham is merely an appliance operator. CQ is a "for profit" business venture, and as such, will not risk losing business to serve the needs of a minority of readers.

So where does this leave me?

I have canceled my subscription to CQ and asked for my money back. No amount of weekend gadget projects can compensate for my complete lack of interest in DXing or contesting.

If CQ comes out with a technical quarterly, I will give it a try. If it is only moderately good, I will support it and try to make it better.

I plan to call my ARRL division director and give him HELL about League advertising that neglects to mention QEX. Your division

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director is usually much more responsive than League officials in Newington, CT.

I will buy more specialty publications such as the 2nd Antenna Compendium (and the Microwave Handbook if it is EVER finished). I will also buy more RSGB publications.

And finally, I will continue to support the ARRL and QST, especially when they utilize their technical articles to teach beginners. I may even try my hand at writing such an article.

73 de Barry, WA4VZQ

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A Visit to the FCC - KA9Q

Last week I spent two days at the FCC in Washington going over the public file in PR Docket 90-55 (no-code).

Boy, does it make us look bad.

When browsing the file, one is overwhelmed by the realization that if there's an important communication skill that's sorely lacking among amateurs, it's not Morse Code -- it's the ability to express one's thoughts and opinions in clear and concise English, with a minimum of emotionalism, misspellings and grammatical errors. Not to mention the ability to type...

The files currently occupy three thick loose-leaf binders. As a rough guess, I'd say that about a third of the entries in the file are duplicates. Before the PR 90-55 NPRM was released, most comments specified all twelve of the no-code RMs. The staff dutifully made 12 photocopies of each comment (or used the copies provided by the

authors) and filed one under each RM. When the NPRM came out, they just "folded" all of the comments into the 90-55 docket file without bothering to remove the duplicates.

Although I didn't try to keep a count (the duplicates would have made this very tedious) the opinion seemed to be roughly split. There were those who argued vehemently against no-code come hell or high water, those who supported the original League proposal, and a surprisingly large number of those who argued that full 6 and 2 meter privileges should be given to Communicators. Many, if not most, commentors seemed to be more concerned about the proposed abolition of the Novice class license than about the creation of the Communicator.

The file contained many hand-written comments that were almost illegible, especially after photocopying. There were even copies of scrawled comments on the backs of envelopes! Even the typed comments usually took the form of informal letters, most addressed to "Dear Sir", some to members of Congress or President Bush. (The latter two groups of letters were forwarded to the FCC under form cover letters.) VERY few were submitted in the proper style that you're supposed to use for formal comments: double-spaced, with the standard header and the docket number at the top. (One wonders how many letters got thrown in the trash because the staff gave up trying to figure out what the hell they were about.)

In fact, the number of properly formatted, legible, well written and thoughtful comments (on either side of the issue) could almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. So if you thought your words would be drowned in a sea of comments, take heart: if you take the time to prepare your comments properly, I think they would be noticed. Remember that the FCC isn't obligated to base its decision on a simple poll of the amateur population, so a single, well written and ORIGINAL comment can have a lot more weight than dozens of identical form letters that say very little.

Also, there were precious few comments written by non-hams. The impression is that no one outside ham radio gives a damn! If you're like me, you have friends and colleagues who are interested in becoming hams, but who are waiting to see if a code free license will be created. Get them to write letters! They don't have to be long; a page will do. The cutest entry in the file (in my opinion) came from a ham's two kids (ages 9 and 10), asking the FCC to start issuing Communicator licenses. Sure, their dad probably put them up to it,

but the letter appeared to be their own work.

By the way, the very first entry in the file was a photocopy of a postcard from KZ1Y dated 2-25-89. It said, in full: "Dear Sir. As an Extra-Class ham of 20 years standing, I would like to request the Commission to implement a "no-code" ham license, similar to Canada's license structure. Thank you." And the Commission assigned it rulemaking number RM-6984! Given that most petitions arriving at the FCC consist of weighty tomes written by armies of lawyers, apparently this entry has already become a classic with the people who follow the FCC (so according to KC5CW).

My purpose for looking at the file was (in addition to simple curiosity) to find specific examples of each of the standard anti-no-code arguments so I could rebut them in my own comments without appearing to set up straw men. I also wanted to find new ones that I hadn't yet heard. Perhaps the most novel was from W3CVE, who claimed to have spent WW II in the FCC Radio Intelligence Division (RID) tracking down Nazi spies using CW:

"Now, if we have no-code licenses the misfits would'n't [sic] know what the heck they were hearing if a spy station was sending espionage in CW. Don't you see what no-code license [sic] would mean to our National Security. Every radio amateur should be able to transcribe CW at least five wpm. There is [sic] espionage CW spy stations on the air - I have reported many to the FCC Watch Officer."

Well, this certainly was a new one! I found it especially amusing having seen an obscure film called "Patrolling the Ether" -- a WW II propaganda film about the RID that can best be described as the radio version of "Reefer Madness". Paul Rinaldo found it some years ago, and showing it became a tradition after ARRL Digital Committee meetings. A real classic.

Phil - KA9Q

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July 8, 1990

HANDICAPPED WAIVERS - THE REAL INFO

There is a lot of misinformation on the June 15 action granting waivers to handicapped individuals seeking ham licenses.

Here are some of the facts garnered from Jim Georgias W9JUG of the DeVry VEC operation in Chicago.

- 1) This is a FINAL FCC ACTION -- not a proposal. It was mandated on us, not released as a discussion and commentary item. IT IS THE LAW!!!
- 2) While effective as of June 15, the VEC's won't be able to handle the waivers till about July 15. By law, they technically must handle them right now, but the FCC has only told them that they have to handle them, not how to do it. So, the VEC's have said that July 15 will be the start-up date.
- 3) Writing nasty letters to congress won't reverse this FCC decision because it WAS CONGRESS --under pressure from various non-amateur handicapped groups that mandated the change in Part 97 testing regulations. CONGRESS WANTS THE CHANGE AND I DOUBT IF THE AMATEUR COMMUNITY HAS THE POLITICAL MIGHT TO REVERSE THIS!
- 4) A handicapped person must prove medically that he/she cannot pass a code test at a speed greater than 5 WPM to qualify for a waiver. This means a doctors certificate and accompanying documentation. The FCC will grant the waivers after review on a case by case basis.
- 5) Complaints to your local FCC field office are of little value. They probably know nothing about the waivers yet. The only people yet informed officially are the 13 VECs who attended the VEC Conference in Gettysburg PA on June 15. This includes the nations three largest: ARRL-VEC, W5YI VEC and DeVry VEC.
- 6) Both the W5YI Report and Westlink Report ham newsletters WILL HAVE FULL COVERAGE OF THIS ITEM. Read one or both before you react to something that YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER!
- 7) The current AMATEUR RADIO NEWSLINE ham newscast has some information on this matter. Try calling it (213) 462-0008, (818) 352-5618, (708) 289-0423, (513) 275-9991, (718) 353-2801 (206) 368-3969 to hear the facts -- not the "reactionary fiction" being

circulated by unknowlegable people here on packet.

73, Bill/WA6ITF, NEWSLINE

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RESPONSE

FidoNet Ham/Packet Digest Questionare

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province/Other: _____

Country: _____

Are you an Amateur Radio Operator? _____

If so, what is your call sign? _____

How long have you been licensed? _____

In a few brief comments, could you tell me what you like, or dislike about the Fidonet Ham/Packet Digest? Your feedback is appreciated!

Please mail this back to : Brian J. Murrey - KB9BVN
PO Box 47453
Indpls., IN 46247-0453
United States of America

Thank You !